

SUMMARY

SSI DISABLED WORKERS

SEPTEMBER 1999

In September 1999, there were 342,680 SSI disabled beneficiaries who were working (6.4 percent of the total SSI disabled caseload). Included in this count were 70,580 section 1619(b) participants who do not receive an SSI payment, but who have special SSI recipient status for Medicaid purposes. Almost three-fourths (69.9 percent) of the workers had amounts of earned income below the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level of \$700 per month; 27.7 percent earned \$65 or less.

Among the States, the percentage of disabled workers varied from a low of 2.9 percent in Mississippi to a high of 19.6 percent in Iowa. In general, the percentage of disabled workers was higher in the Northern States than in the Southern States.

The majority of these disabled workers were male (53.6 percent). Almost half (46.4 percent) had unearned income; 39.6 percent were receiving social security benefits. Comparable figures for all disabled recipients in September 1999 were: 44.6 percent male, 37.8 percent with unearned income, and 30.6 percent receiving social security benefits.

Disabled workers are more likely to have certain impairments than other disabled recipients. Almost three-fourths (74.2 percent) of the workers had a mental disorder, including 49.1 percent who were diagnosed with mental retardation. This compares to 57.9 percent of all disabled recipients with a mental disorder, including 24.4 percent with mental retardation.

The greatest use of work incentive provisions was by participants under section 1619—27.6 percent of disabled workers. This included 7.0 percent under section 1619(a), and 20.6 percent under section 1619(b).

Use of other work incentive provisions continued to have a smaller, but measurable, impact. In September 1999, 4.5 percent of the SSI disabled workers had some of their income excluded under one of these provisions—plan for achieving self support (PASS), (0.3 percent); impairment related work expenses (IRWE), (2.9 percent), or blind work expenses (BWE), (1.2 percent).

A PASS permits an SSI recipient to set aside income and resources to help obtain the training or education necessary for certain specified occupational goals. In September 1999, 351 PASS participants had earnings, which averaged \$577 per month. However, exclusions under a PASS are not limited to earnings. Of the 1,069 disabled recipients with a PASS, almost two-thirds (66.4 percent) did not have any earnings reported for September 1999. For this group, the PASS excluded unearned income such as social security benefits. Out of all PASS participants, 70 had a PASS that excluded only resources.